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World demographic trends

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Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Prepared in accordance with resolution 1996/2 of the Economic and Social Council, the present report provides an overview of demographic trends worldwide for major areas and selected countries. It covers population size and growth, urbanization and city growth, population ageing, fertility and contraception, mortality, and international migration. In addition to world demographic trends, a section on population policies has been included, in which the concerns and responses of Governments to the major trends are summarized.

The last century, especially the second half, witnessed record rates of population growth, impressive declines in mortality and fertility, population ageing, rapid urbanization and city growth, and increased international migration. The report highlights the consequences of these population trends and the opportunities as well as the challenges that they present for all societies in the twenty-first century.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report provides an overview of demographic trends worldwide for major areas and selected countries. It reviews major population trends relating to population size and growth, urbanization and city growth, population ageing, fertility and contraception, mortality, including HIV/AIDS, and international migration. In addition, a section on population policies has been included, in which the concerns and responses of Governments to the major population trends are summarized.

2. The demographic trends presented are based on the results of *World Population Prospects: the 2000 Revision*,[1] the seventeenth round of official United Nations population estimates and projections prepared by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat. The results of the eighteenth round, the 2002 revision, are nearing completion and are expected to be released in the near future.[2]

3. World demographic trends are based on population estimates and projections made separately for each country or area. The estimates cover the period 1950-2000 and the projections cover the period 2000-2050. Projections of the population by age and sex are prepared by using the components method, which requires that explicit assumptions be made about future levels and trends of fertility, mortality and international migration. Sets of countries are grouped into geographic regions and major areas, more developed regions and less developed regions, as well as into the group of least developed countries.

4. The population policies of Governments presented in the present report are from *National Population Policies 2001*,[3] also issued by the Secretariat. The monitoring of national population policies at the international level has a long history that goes back to the World Population Plan of Action adopted at the World Population Conference held in Bucharest in 1974.[4] The policies examined cover the major population variables and are presented in a descriptive and concise format, focusing on analytical comparisons of countries and regions at present as well as over time. As is the case in the preparation of population estimates and projections, the monitoring of national population policies is guided by principles of objectivity and non-advocacy.

II. Population size and growth

5. World population reached 6 billion persons at the end of the twentieth century and is currently growing slightly more than 1 per cent annually. The addition of the sixth billion took place in a 12-year period, i.e., between 1987 and 1999, which is the shortest time that the world has gained a billion persons. The addition of the next billion, the seventh, is expected to take a bit longer, about 14 years.

6. The population of the more developed regions, currently estimated at slightly more than 1 billion persons, is anticipated to change little during the coming decades. However, noteworthy demographic changes are expected to occur among the developed countries. In many countries, especially in Europe, populations are projected to decline as fertility levels are expected to remain below replacement levels. Other developed countries will see their populations continue to grow

because their fertility levels are closer to replacement levels and because of significant flows of international migration.

7. The population of the less developed regions is projected to rise steadily, from about 5 billion persons today to around 8 billion persons by mid-century (medium variant). That projection assumes continuing declines in fertility. In the absence of such declines, the population of the less developed regions could be substantially larger than projected. Particularly rapid growth is expected in the group of 49 countries classified as the least developed. By mid-century, for example, the population of the least developed countries could nearly triple in size.

8. The current annual increment to world population is about 77 million persons. Six countries account for half of that amount: India (21 per cent); China (12 per cent); Pakistan (5 per cent); Nigeria (4 per cent); Bangladesh (4 per cent); and Indonesia (3 per cent). As a result of India's relatively rapid growth, it is expected to overtake China as the most populous country in the world well before the middle of the century.

9. An additional 16 countries account for a quarter of the annual growth of the world's population (table 1). Among those 22 countries, which together are responsible for three fourths of current world population growth, there is one developed country, i.e., the United States of America. The growth of the United States population represents over 3 per cent of world population growth; however, close to half of the population growth of the United States is the result of international migration.

10. The world population growth rate has fallen from its peak of 2 per cent per year in the late 1960s to slightly above 1 per cent today. Nevertheless, United Nations population projections point to continued population growth during this century. After another decade, for example, world population is expected to reach 7 billion persons. The 8 billion mark is expected to be reached by around 2025 and the 9 billion mark around mid-century (medium variant).

Table 1
Countries accounting for 75 per cent of population growth in the world, 2000-2005
(medium variant)

	Country	*Annual population increase, 2000-2005 (millions)*	*Cumulated percentage*
1	India	15.9	21
2	China	9.2	33
3	Pakistan	3.8	38
4	Nigeria	3.2	42
5	Bangladesh	3.0	46
6	Indonesia	2.6	49
7	United States of America	2.6	53
8	Brazil	2.1	55

	Country	Annual population increase, 2000-2005 (millions)	Cumulated percentage
9	Dem. Rep. of the Congo	1.9	58
10	Ethiopia	1.6	60
11	Philippines	1.5	62
12	Mexico	1.5	64
13	Egypt	1.2	65
14	Viet Nam	1.1	67
15	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	1.0	68
16	Turkey	0.9	69
17	Afghanistan	0.9	70
18	United Rep. of Tanzania	0.9	71
19	Yemen	0.8	72
20	Uganda	0.8	73
21	Sudan	0.8	74
22	Thailand	0.7	75
	WORLD	76.9	100

11. While world population is continuing to grow, considerable diversity exists in the expected population growth of countries. Some countries are expected to grow relatively rapidly in size in the coming decades; others are anticipated to grow little and still others are projected to decline in size. For example, the contribution of the eight countries adding 100 million or more persons by mid-century are shown in table 2. India is by far the largest contributor to world population growth, adding slightly more than a half billion persons by 2050. After India comes Pakistan, which is projected to gain about 200 million more persons, followed by China and Nigeria with an additional 187 million and 165 million persons, respectively. In contrast, the Russian Federation is expected to experience the largest decline in population, around 41 million persons; Ukraine, Japan and Italy follow with projected decreases of 20 million, 18 million and 15 million persons, respectively (table 2).

Table 2
Top eight countries in terms of population increase and decrease from 2000 to 2050
(medium variant)

	Country	Population change 2000-2050 (millions)
A.	**Population increase**	
1	India	563
2	Pakistan	203
3	China	187
4	Nigeria	165

	Country	Population change 2000-2050 (millions)
5	Dem. Rep. of the Congo	153
6	Bangladesh	128
7	Ethiopia	123
8	United States of America	114
B.	**Population decrease**	
1	Russian Federation	-41
2	Ukraine	-20
3	Japan	-18
4	Italy	-15
5	Germany	-11
6	Spain	-7
7	Poland	-5
8	Romania	-4

III. Urbanization and city growth

12. The world's urban population reached 2.9 billion persons in 2000 and is expected to rise to 5 billion persons by 2030 (table 3). Whereas 30 per cent of the world population lived in urban areas in 1950, the proportion of urban dwellers rose to 47 per cent by 2000 and is projected to reach 60 per cent by 2030. By 2007, half the world population is expected to live in urban areas.

13. Almost all of the world population increase expected during the period 2000-2030 will be absorbed by the urban areas of the less developed regions. During that period the urban population of the less developed regions is expected to increase by 2 billion persons, nearly as much as will be added to the world population.

Table 3
Selected indicators for the urban and rural population by development group, 1995-2030

	Population (billions)			Growth rate (percentage)		Doubling time (years)	
Development group	*1995*	*2000*	*2030*	*1995-2000*	*2000-2030*	*1995-2000*	*2000-2030*
A. Population size and growth							
Total population							
World	5.66	6.06	8.27	1.35	1.04	51	67
More developed regions	1.17	1.19	1.22	0.30	0.07	235	998
Less developed regions	4.49	4.87	7.05	1.61	1.24	43	56
Urban population							
World	2.57	2.86	4.98	2.19	1.85	32	38
More developed regions	0.88	0.90	1.00	0.50	0.38	138	185

Development group	Population (billions)			Growth rate (percentage)		Doubling time (years)	
	1995	2000	2030	1995-2000	2000-2030	1995-2000	2000-2030
Less developed regions	1.69	1.96	3.98	3.01	2.35	23	29
Rural population							
World	3.10	3.19	3.29	0.63	0.10	111	714
More developed regions	0.30	0.29	0.21	-0.32	-1.09	...	...
Less developed regions	2.80	2.90	3.08	0.72	0.20	96	352

B. Urban indicators

	Percentage urban			Urbanization rate (percentage)		Doubling time (years)	
	1995	2000	2030	1995-2000	2000-2030	1995-2000	2000-2030
World	45.3	47.2	60.2	0.84	0.84	83	86
More developed regions	74.6	75.4	82.6	0.21	0.31	...	...
Less developed regions	37.7	40.4	56.4	1.39	1.11	50	62

14. In contrast, the rural population of the world is expected to increase only slightly during the next 30 years — from 3.2 billion persons in 2000 to 3.3 billion persons in 2030. Moreover, all of that increase will occur in the less developed regions, which will add around 177 million persons to their rural areas. The rural population of the more developed regions is projected to continue its long-term decline, falling by an additional 82 million persons during the next 30 years.

15. The urban growth rate of the less developed regions reached 3 per cent per year in the period 1995-2000 compared to 0.5 per cent in the more developed regions. The urban growth rate will continue to be particularly rapid in the urban areas of the less developed regions, averaging 2.4 per cent per year during 2000-2030, consistent with a doubling time of 29 years. In contrast, the rural population of the less developed regions is expected to grow very slowly, at just 0.2 per cent per year during the period 2000-2030. The world rural population will remain nearly stable during the period 2000-2030, varying between 3.2 billion and 3.3 billion persons.

16. The process of urbanization is already very advanced in the more developed regions, where 75 per cent of the population lived in urban areas in 2000. Nevertheless, the concentration of population in cities is expected to continue so that, by 2030, 84 per cent of the inhabitants of the more developed countries will be urban dwellers. The level of urbanization is considerably lower in the less developed regions, where 40 per cent of the population lived in urban areas in 2000. That proportion is expected to rise to 56 per cent by 2030.

17. There are marked differences in the level and pace of urbanization among the major areas constituting the less developed regions of the world. Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole are highly urbanized, with 75 per cent of the population living in urban settlements in 2000, a proportion higher than that of Europe. Moreover, that proportion is twice as high as the one estimated for Africa or Asia. With 37 per cent of their respective populations living in urban areas in 2000, Africa and Asia are considerably less urbanized and, consequently, are expected to experience rapid rates of urbanization during the period 2000-2030. It is expected

that by 2030, 53 per cent and 54 per cent, respectively, of their inhabitants will live in urban areas. At that time, 84 per cent of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean will be urban, a level similar to that of northern America, the most highly urbanized area of the world, by 2030.

18. The proportion of people living in very large urban agglomerations or mega-cities is relatively small. In 2000, 3.7 per cent of the world population resided in cities of 10 million inhabitants or more and by 2015 that proportion is expected to rise to 4.7 per cent. In contrast, 24.8 per cent of the world population lived in urban settlements with fewer than 500,000 inhabitants and by 2015 that proportion will likely rise to 27.1 per cent. In 2000, 41.8 per cent of the population in the developed countries lived in urban settlements with fewer than 500,000 inhabitants and by 2015 that proportion is expected to rise to 43 per cent. In the less developed regions, where the majority of the population still resides in rural areas, the proportion of people living in small cities was 20.7 per cent in 2000 and will rise to 23.8 per cent by 2015.

19. About half of all urban dwellers lived in settlements with fewer than 500,000 inhabitants, a proportion that is expected to decline slightly by 2015 but still remain over 50 per cent. Consequently, the trend towards concentration of the population in larger urban settlements has not yet resulted in a marked decline of either the proportion or the number of persons living in smaller urban settlements.

20. With 26.5 million inhabitants, Tokyo is the most populous urban agglomeration in the world, followed by São Paulo (18.3 million), Mexico City (18.3 million), New York (16.8 million) and Mumbai (16.5 million) (table 4). By 2015, Tokyo will remain the largest urban agglomeration with 27.2 million inhabitants, followed by Dhaka, Mumbai, São Paulo, Delhi and Mexico City, all of which are expected to have more than 20 million inhabitants.

Table 4
Population of cities with 10 million inhabitants or more, 1950, 1975, 2001 and 2015
(millions)

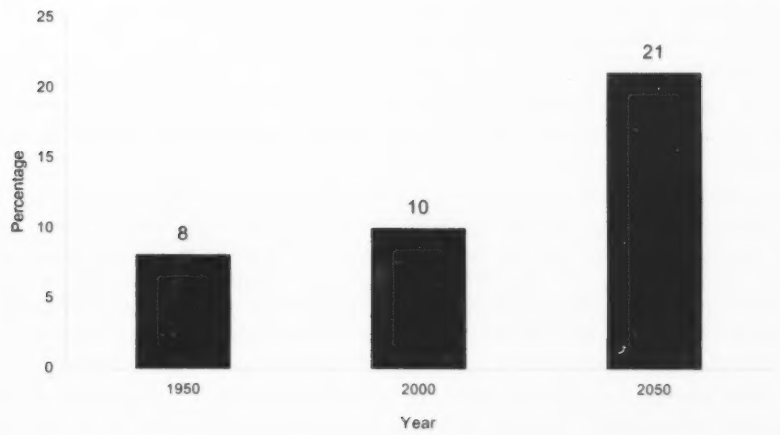
	1950		*1975*		*2001*		*2015*	
	City	*Population*	*City*	*Population*	*City*	*Population*	*City*	*Population*
1	New York	12.3	1 Tokyo	19.8	1 Tokyo	26.5	1 Tokyo	27.2
			2 New York	15.9	2 São Paulo	18.3	2 Dhaka	22.8
			3 Shanghai	11.4	3 Mexico City	18.3	3 Mumbai	22.6
			4 Mexico City	10.7	4 New York	16.8	4 São Paulo	21.2
			5 São Paulo	10.3	5 Mumbai	16.5	5 Delhi	20.9
					6 Los Angeles	13.3	6 Mexico City	20.4
					7 Calcutta	13.3	7 New York	17.9
					8 Dhaka	13.2	8 Jakarta	17.3
					9 Delhi	13.0	9 Calcutta	16.7

1950		1975		2001			2015		
City	*Population*	*City*	*Population*		*City*	*Population*		*City*	*Population*
				10	Shanghai	12.8	10	Karachi	16.2
				11	Buenos Aires	12.1	11	Lagos	16.0
				12	Jakarta	11.4	12	Los Angeles	14.5
				13	Osaka	11.0	13	Shanghai	13.6
				14	Beijing	10.8	14	Buenos Aires	13.2
				15	Rio de Janeiro	10.8	15	Metro Manila	12.6
				16	Karachi	10.4	16	Beijing	11.7
				17	Metro Manila	10.1	17	Rio de Janeiro	11.5
							18	Cairo	11.5
							19	Istanbul	11.4
							20	Osaka	11.0
							21	Tianjin	10.3

IV. Population ageing

21. During the twentieth century the proportion of older persons (those aged 60 or over) continued to rise and this trend is expected to continue well into the twenty-first century. For example, the proportion of older persons was 8 per cent in 1950 and 10 per cent in 2000 and is projected to reach around 20 per cent by mid-century (figure I).

Figure I
Proportion of population 60 years or older: world, 1950-2050



22. As the twenty-first century began, the world population included approximately 600 million older persons, triple the number recorded fifty years earlier. By 2050, the world is expected to have some 2 billion older persons — once again, a tripling of that age group in a span of 50 years.

23. Globally, the population of older persons is growing by 2 per cent each year, considerably faster than the population as a whole. For at least the next 25 years, the older population is expected to continue growing more rapidly than other age groups. The growth rate of those 60 or older will reach 2.8 per cent annually in the period 2025-2030. Such rapid growth will require far-reaching economic and social adjustments in most countries.

24. Marked differences exist between regions in the number and proportion of older persons. In the more developed regions, almost one fifth of the population was aged 60 or older in the year 2000; by 2050, that proportion is expected to reach one third. In the less developed regions, 8 per cent of the population is currently over the age of 60; however, by 2050 older persons will make up one fifth of the population.

25. As the pace of population ageing is much faster in the developing countries than in the developed ones, developing countries will have less time to adjust to the consequences of population ageing. Moreover, population ageing in the developing countries is taking place at much lower levels of socio-economic development than was the case in the developed countries.

26. The older population is itself ageing. The fastest growing age group in the world is the oldest-old, those aged 80 years or older. They are currently increasing at 3.8 per cent per year and comprise more than one tenth of the total number of older persons. By the middle of the century, one fifth of older persons will be 80 years or older.

27. The potential support ratio, or PSR (the number of persons aged 15-64 years per one older person aged 65 years or older), indicates the dependency burden on potential workers. The impact of demographic ageing is visible in the PSR, which has fallen and will continue to fall. From 1950 to 2000, the PSR fell from 12 to 9 people in the working ages per each person 65 years or older. By mid-century, the PSR for the world is projected to fall to four working-age persons for each person 65 years or older (figure II). Potential support ratios have important implications for social security schemes, particularly traditional systems in which current workers pay for the benefits of current retirees.

28. The majority of older persons are women, as female life expectancy is higher than that for men. In 2000, there were 63 million more women than men aged 60 or older and, at the oldest ages, there are two to five times as many women as men (figure III).

29. Unprecedented demographic changes, which had their origins in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and are continuing well into the twenty-first century, are transforming the world. The declines in fertility reinforced by increasing longevity have produced and will continue to produce unprecedented changes in the age structure of all societies, notably the historic reversal in the proportions of young and older persons. The profound, pervasive and enduring consequences of population ageing present opportunities as well as challenges for all societies.

Figure II
Potential support ratio (PSR): world, 1950-2050

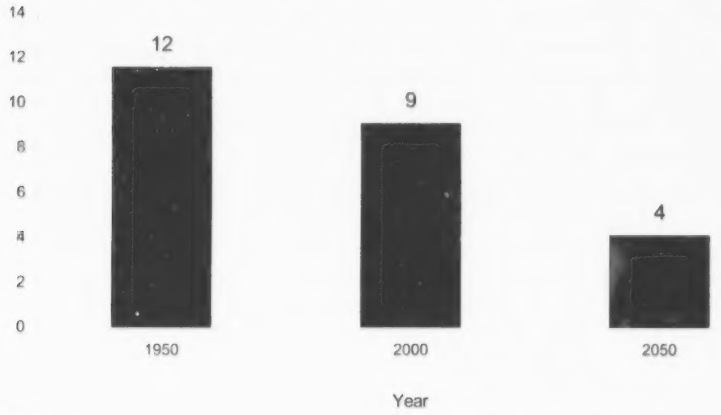
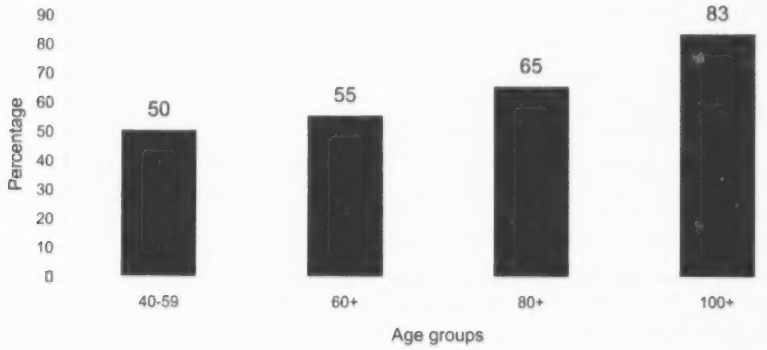


Figure III
Proportion of women among persons aged 40-59, 60+, 80+ and 100+ years: world, 2000



V. Fertility and contraception

30. One of the most significant demographic changes over the last several decades has been the substantial decline in fertility in all areas of the world. A generation or so ago, for example, the total fertility rate — that is, the average number of children a woman would bear if fertility rates remained unchanged during her lifetime — was close to five children per woman at the world level. By the end of the twentieth century, the fertility rate had declined to slightly less than three children per woman.

31. Approximately one third of the world's countries or areas currently experience fertility levels at or below replacement level. Those countries account for about 44 per cent of the world's population, or 2.7 billion persons. Because their levels of

fertility are low and are expected to remain low during the coming decades, the populations of those countries are projected to grow relatively little by mid-century. Moreover, in some instances, such as Germany, Greece, Italy, Japan, Poland, Russia, Spain and Ukraine, populations are expected to decline owing to sustained, low levels of fertility.

32. The remaining countries of the world, with a combined population of about three and a half billion persons, experience total fertility levels above replacement level. About 40 per cent of them have fertility levels at or above five children per woman. As a consequence, the population of that group of countries is expected to grow markedly in the coming decades.

33. Among the developing countries, the pace of fertility decline during the recent past has varied significantly. Although most countries in the less developed regions are already far advanced in the transition from high to low fertility, there are some 16 countries that exhibit sustained high fertility and for which there is either no recent evidence about fertility trends or the available evidence does not indicate the onset of a fertility reduction. In those countries, even though fertility is projected to decline after 2005 at a rate of 1 child per decade, it is not expected to reach replacement level by the period 2045-2050.

34. The high fertility of those countries, with a combined population of more than a quarter of a billion persons, will lead to rapid population growth. By mid-century, their overall population will nearly quadruple, surpassing the 1 billion mark. The countries involved all belong to the group of the least developed countries. The continuation of rapid population growth raises serious challenges to the future development of those countries.

35. Turning to contraception, it is estimated that worldwide 62 per cent or 650 million of the more than 1 billion married or in-union women of reproductive age are using contraception. In the more developed regions, 70 per cent of married women use a method of contraception, while in the less developed regions 60 per cent do. In Africa, 25 per cent of married women are using contraception, whereas in Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean the prevalence of contraceptive use is fairly high — 66 per cent and 69 per cent, respectively.

36. Nine out of 10 contraceptive users worldwide rely on modern methods, the most common of which are female sterilization (20 per cent of married women), intrauterine devices (IUDs) (15 per cent) and pills (8 per cent). Modern methods are considered more effective at preventing pregnancy and require access to family planning services or supplies.

37. Short-acting and reversible methods are more popular in the developed countries, whereas longer-acting methods are more popular in the developing countries. In the developed countries, contraceptive users rely mostly on pills (17 per cent of married women) and condoms (15 per cent). In contrast, female sterilization and IUDs, used by 22 per cent and 16 per cent, respectively, of married women, dominate in the developing countries.

38. Traditional methods are more popular in the developed countries than in the developing countries. They are used by 11 per cent of married couples in the more developed countries compared with just 5 per cent in the developing countries. The higher prevalence of traditional method use in the developed countries accounts for much of the difference between the developed and the developing countries in

contraceptive use. The most used traditional methods include rhythm (periodic abstinence) and withdrawal. In the world as a whole, those methods are used by about 1 out of 20 married women.

39. Contraceptive use increased markedly over the past decade. In the developing countries, the percentage of individuals using contraception increased by at least 1 point per annum in two thirds of the countries and by at least 2 points per annum in 15 per cent of the countries. In Africa, the percentage of individuals using contraception among married women increased from around 15 per cent 10 years ago to 25 per cent today; in Asia, it increased from around 52 per cent to 66 per cent; and in Latin America and the Caribbean, it increased from around 57 per cent to 69 per cent. The developed countries show little growth in levels of contraceptive use over the past decade, as a result of their already relatively high contraceptive prevalence.

VI. Mortality, including HIV/AIDS

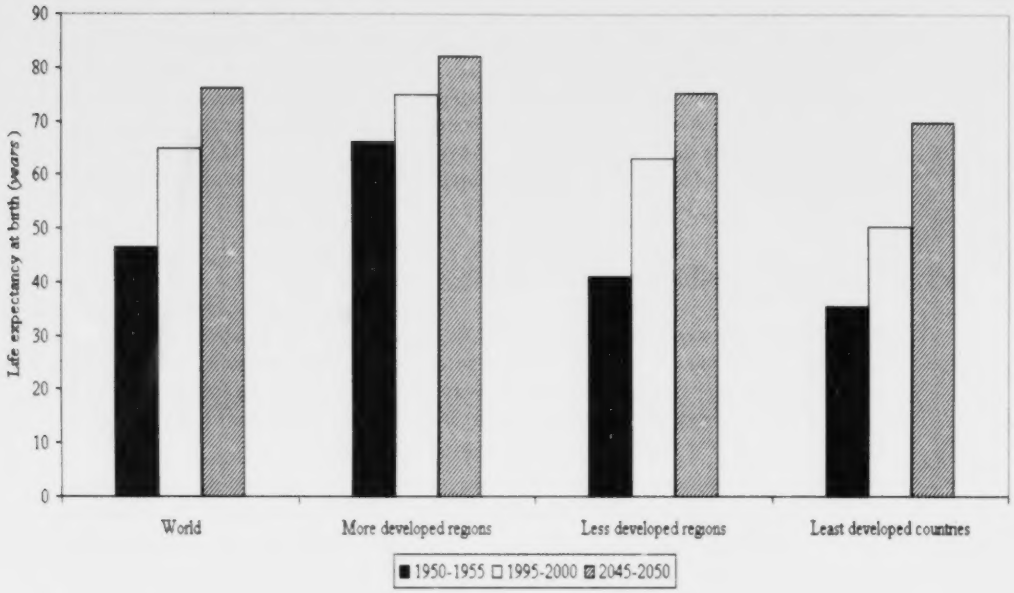
40. During the twentieth century, mortality experienced the most rapid decline in the history of humanity. Although the sustained reduction of mortality started in the eighteenth century, it gained momentum in the early part of the twentieth century as better hygiene, improved nutrition and medical practices based on scientific evidence became the rule in the more advanced countries.

41. Despite the setbacks brought about by the two world wars, by the period 1950-1955 mortality had declined markedly in the more developed regions. For example, by mid-century average life expectancy at birth had reached 66 years, ranging from 63 years in southern Europe to 70 years in Australia and New Zealand.

42. The mid-century also marked an important turning point in the less developed regions. With the expanded use of antibiotics, vaccines and insecticides, mortality in the developing world began to decline rapidly. For example, life expectancy at birth for the less developed regions increased by slightly more than 50 per cent from 1950 to 1955 and from 1995 to 2000, rising from around 41 to 63 years. As a result, the mortality differentials between the less developed and the more developed regions narrowed. By the period 1995-2000, the difference in life expectancy between the two groups amounted to 12 years instead of the 25-year difference observed in the period 1950-1955 (figure IV).

43. There remains, however, a group of countries — the least developed — where the reduction of mortality has lagged behind. While mortality declined in the least developed countries, it did not keep pace with mortality improvements in the less developed regions. For example, the difference between the life expectancy of the least developed countries and that of the less developed regions as a whole increased from 5.5 years in the period 1950-1955 to 12.6 years in the period 1995-2000. A major reason for such an increase is that the 49 countries classified as least developed include 26 that are highly affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Figure IV
Life expectancy at birth for the world and development groups, selected periods, 1950-2050



44. Until fairly recently it was expected that mortality would continue declining in all countries, especially in those that were still experiencing moderate to high mortality levels because of their late start in the transition to low mortality. However, two developments have made it necessary to adjust those expectations: HIV/AIDS and the shocks from socio-economic transformations in countries with economies in transition.

45. The emergence of the virus that causes the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and the worldwide pandemic that it has generated have already produced marked increases in mortality in the countries most affected by the disease. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, more than 60 million persons are estimated to have been infected by the virus and about 40 million were still alive. Close to 95 per cent of those infected with HIV are living in the developing countries, with sub-Saharan Africa experiencing the highest prevalence rates. In addition, the number of countries where HIV prevalence has become significant has been growing rapidly in Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. While it is not yet certain that the spread in those regions will follow the pattern observed in Africa, rapid and effective responses may be required to avert the devastation that Africa is already experiencing.

46. It has also become evident that mortality has tended to stagnate or even to increase in certain countries with economies in transition, most of which exhibited fairly low mortality in the period 1950-1955. The causes for the slowdown or reversal of the transition to low mortality are multiple and complex, but they have no doubt been exacerbated by the momentous social and economic transformations resulting from the political changes taking place in the former communist countries since 1985.

47. As a result of those developments and in the light of the mortality increases that have occurred in countries affected by conflict or civil strife, considerable uncertainty exists about the future path of mortality. It seems less certain than a decade or two ago that mortality will necessarily decrease in all countries in future. Nevertheless, mortality has declined more rapidly than expected in a number of developed countries, so that the possibility of further medical and technological breakthroughs that may increase the human lifespan cannot be ruled out, opening up the prospect of a future where expectations of life at birth above 85 or 90 years will be a reality in certain populations.

48. With regard to gender differences in mortality, by the end of the twentieth century female life expectancy was higher than male life expectancy in all regions, although the difference between the two was relatively small in South-Central Asia. However, even in that region, there had been a marked gain in life expectancy for females in relation to that of males, especially given that in the period 1950-1955 South-central Asia was the only region where females had a lower life expectancy than males.

49. Female life expectancy increased more than male life expectancy during the last half century in three major areas: Asia, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean (see table 5). In contrast, in Africa, northern America and Oceania the sex differentials remained relatively unchanged or declined. In Europe, female life expectancy made the greatest gains with respect to that of males, whereas in Africa male life expectancy made the greatest gains with respect to that of females and the sex differential in life expectancy declined. Generally, the female advantage in life expectancy was less in the period 1950-1955 than in the period 1995-2000.

50. Over the past 50 years a major part of the reduction of mortality has occurred in childhood. Overall levels of life expectancy are strongly determined by mortality at young ages, especially when mortality is high. Consequently, the marked increases in life expectancy that occurred during the period 1950-2000 at the world level reflect in large part sharp drops of mortality in childhood. Future reductions of mortality are expected to result in the virtual elimination of deaths at young ages in many countries. However, certain regions and countries are expected to fare better than others in achieving such a goal.

Table 5
Life expectancy at birth in 1950-1955 and 1995-2000 and selected indicators of trends and differentials by sex for the world and major areas

Major area or region	*Male (years)*		*Female (years)*		*Difference between female and male life expectancy at birth*	
	1950-1955	*1995-2000*	*1950-1955*	*1995-2000*	*1950-1955*	*1995-2000*
World	45.2	62.9	47.9	67.1	2.7	4.2
More developed regions	63.6	71.1	68.6	78.6	5.0	7.5
Less developed regions	40.2	61.4	41.8	64.5	1.6	3.1
Least developed countries	35.0	49.4	36.1	51.2	1.1	1.8
Less developed regions without the least developed countries	41.0	63.9	42.7	67.2	1.7	3.3
Europe	63.1	69.1	68.0	77.4	4.9	8.3
Northern America	66.1	73.8	71.9	79.6	5.8	5.8
Oceania	58.5	71.0	63.5	76.1	5.0	5.1
Africa	36.5	50.3	39.2	52.4	2.7	2.1
Asia	40.7	64.3	42.1	67.4	1.4	3.1
Latin America and the Caribbean	49.7	66.1	53.1	72.6	3.4	6.5

51. Another aspect of mortality trends that needs consideration is the changing age distribution of deaths. In contrast to the period 1950-1955, when 42 per cent of all deaths took place before the age of five and just 26 per cent occurred above age 60, by the period 1995-2000 21 per cent of all deaths took place by age five and 50 per cent occurred among persons aged 60 years or over. By mid-century, it is expected that only 4 per cent of all deaths will occur before the age of 5 and that 81 per cent of all deaths will be those of persons aged 60 years or over.

52. Most regions of the world are projected to see continuing improvements in their mortality rates and as a result, their expectations of life increase to levels that were until recently unprecedented in human history. However, for the least developed countries, even the substantial improvements expected by mid-century are unlikely to eliminate the gap existing between them and the rest of the world. Moreover, given the setbacks that have occurred recently in many of those countries, it may not be at all certain that the projected improvements will be achieved.

VII. International migration

53. Around 175 million persons currently reside in a country other than where they were born, which amount to about 3 per cent of world population. The number of migrants has more than doubled since 1975. Sixty per cent of the world's migrants currently reside in the more developed regions, while 40 per cent reside in the less developed regions. Most of the world's migrants live in Europe (56 million), Asia (50 million) and northern America (41 million).

54. Almost 1 of every 10 persons living in the more developed regions is a migrant. In contrast, nearly 1 of every 70 persons in the developing countries is a migrant. In the 10 years from 1990 to 2000 the number of migrants in the more developed regions increased by 23 million persons, or 28 per cent. With 35 million migrants, the United States contains the largest number of migrants, followed by the Russian Federation with 13 million and Germany with 7 million (figure V). The four countries with the highest proportion of migrant stock are: United Arab Emirates (74 per cent), Kuwait (58 per cent), Jordan (40 per cent) and Israel (37 per cent) (figure VI).

55. In the five years from 1995 to 2000, the more developed regions of the world received nearly 12 million migrants from the less developed regions, around 2.3 million migrants per year. The number of net migrants amounted to 18 per cent of the number of births and the net migration accounted for two thirds of the population growth in the more developed regions. The largest gains per year were made by northern America, which absorbed about 1.5 million migrants annually, followed by Europe with an annual net gain approaching 1 million.

56. Around 1 migrant out of 10 is a refugee. At the end of 2000, the number of refugees in the world stood at 16 million, of which 12 million were under the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and 4 million under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The largest number of refugees was found in Asia (9 million) and in Africa (4 million). Three million refugees were in the developed countries and 13 million in the developing countries.

57. An important aspect of international migration is remittances sent back to the home country by migrants. Those monies are a major source of foreign exchange earnings for some countries and an important addition to gross domestic product. For example, in 2000, remittances from abroad were more than 10 per cent of the gross domestic product for countries such as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cape Verde, El Salvador, Jamaica, Jordan, Nicaragua, Samoa and Yemen.

Figure V
Countries with the largest international migrant stock, 2000

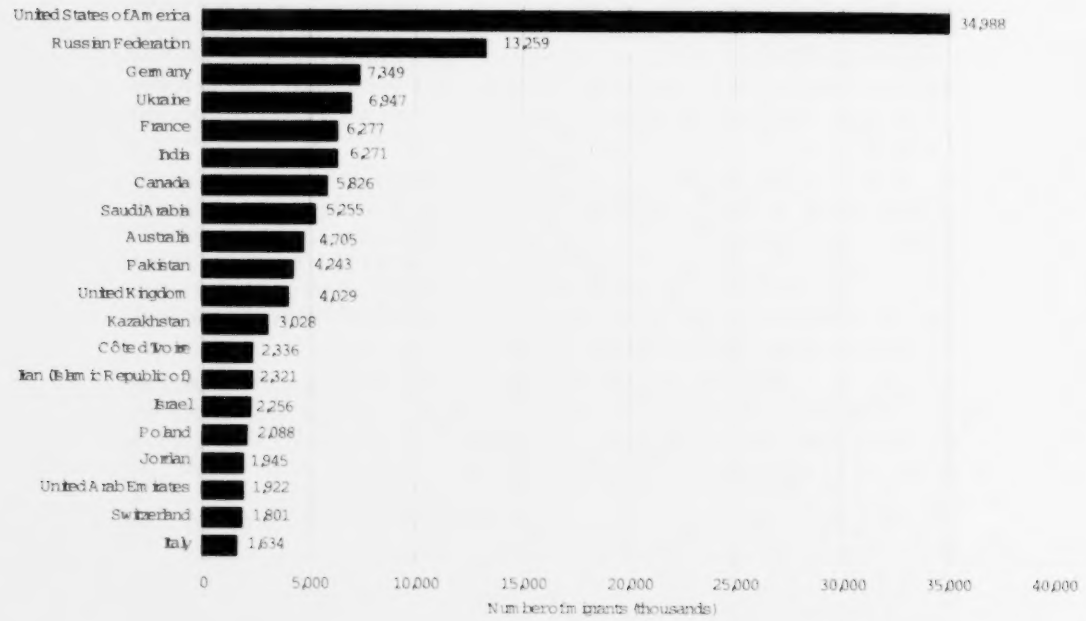
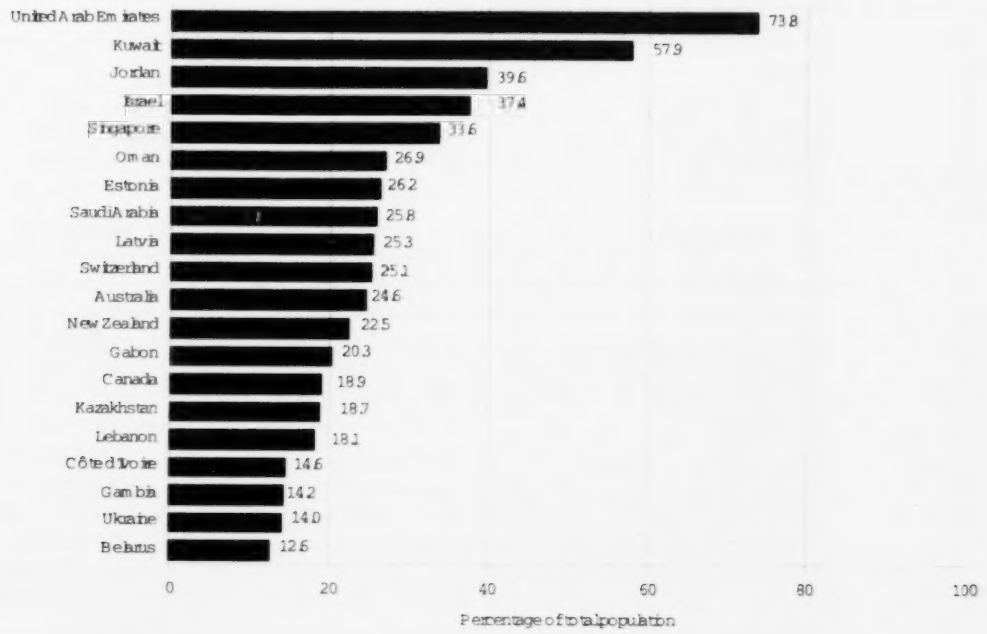


Figure VI
Countries with the highest percentage of international migrant stock in total population, 2000
(countries with population of 1 million or more inhabitants)



VIII. Population policies

58. Continued high rates of population growth remain an issue of policy concern for many countries of the developing world. About half of the countries in the less developed regions considered their rate of population growth to be too high. Such countries encompassed much of Africa (74 per cent) as well as a significant proportion of Asia (43 per cent) and Oceania (44 per cent). Concern with rapid population growth is somewhat lower among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (39 per cent).

59. Nearly 60 per cent of the countries in the less developed regions consider fertility too high and, of the group of 49 least developed countries, close to 80 per cent report fertility as too high. The latter percentage has been rising steadily since the mid-1970s. At that time, about one out of three of the least developed countries thought their fertility was too high. Adolescent fertility is also a concern for Governments, particularly in the less developed regions. About half of the countries in those regions and about one third of the countries in the more developed regions view it as a major concern.

60. Government support for policies and programmes that affect fertility has increased steadily during the last quarter century; about 90 per cent of countries

provide either direct or indirect support for family planning programmes and contraceptives. The practice of limiting access to contraceptives has nearly vanished.

61. Low fertility has become a concern for an increasing number of countries in recent years, particularly in more developed regions. Half the countries in those regions consider fertility to be too low, up from one fifth in the mid-1970s. Of the 34 countries that consider fertility too low, 23 were in Europe, including 9 in eastern Europe.

62. Governments' views of their country's mortality level are split according to development level. About 70 per cent of the countries in the more developed regions considered the level of life expectancy to be acceptable, whereas 39 per cent of the less developed countries and 6 per cent of the least developed countries did so.

63. Some segments of the population—most notably infants and children under 5 years of age — continue to register unacceptably high mortality levels and are considered problem areas for many countries. Maternal mortality is another serious concern, particularly in the less developed countries. In the less developed regions one country in five reports the level of maternal mortality to be acceptable, as compared to three fourths of the countries in the more developed regions. None of the least developed countries consider the level of maternal mortality to be acceptable.

64. During the 20 years since HIV/AIDS was identified as a disease, the pandemic has emerged as one of the leading causes of adult mortality in many countries, particularly in the less developed regions of the world. More than 80 per cent of the countries in those regions reported that AIDS is a major concern, as did nearly 90 per cent of the least developed countries. Concern was also substantial in the more developed regions, where 71 per cent of the countries view AIDS as a major concern.

65. The developed countries show the strongest inclination towards restricting immigration, but the developing countries are following the same trend. Among the developed countries 44 per cent have policies aimed at lowering their immigration levels; the proportion among developing countries is 39 per cent. In comparison, in the mid-1970s 18 per cent of the developed countries and 3 per cent of the developing countries had adopted such policies. Concerning emigration, both the developed and the developing countries show similar trends in their views and policies. Around three out of four countries, whether developed or developing, view their level of emigration as satisfactory, whereas one country in five has policies aimed at lowering emigration.

66. Governments have expressed concern about the spatial distribution of their populations for many years. This concern often arises from high levels of migration from rural to urban areas, urban sprawl and the uncontrolled growth of primate cities and metropolitan areas. Governments in the past have attempted to change distribution in a variety of ways, including building new capitals, encouraging growth in small and medium-sized cities rather than in large ones, creating regional development zones, controlling the movement of people to cities and limiting urban sprawl by curbing development. Most of those attempts have failed to achieve their objectives. However, population distribution remains an area of major concern to a significant number of Governments, particularly in the less developed regions.

IX. Conclusions

67. **The twentieth century was a century of unprecedented population change. It experienced record rates of population growth, impressive declines in mortality and fertility, population ageing, rapid urbanization and city growth and increased international migration. The continuation and consequences of those population trends present opportunities as well as challenges for all societies in the twenty-first century.**

68. **From 1900 to 2000, world population grew from 1.6 billion to 6.1 billion persons, with most of that growth occurring during the second half of the century. Although population growth rates are slowing, United Nations population projections show that the world population is continuing to increase and is expected to add several billion persons by mid-century.**

69. **As in the past, future population growth will be uneven, with nearly all of it occurring in the developing countries, especially in their urban areas. In contrast, owing to below replacement fertility levels, some developed countries are expected to experience significant population decline.**

70. **Declines in fertility reinforced by longevity have produced and will continue to produce older populations on unprecedented scales. Most notable, perhaps, are the historic reversals in the proportions of young and older persons. Population ageing will require far-reaching economic and social adjustments in most countries.**

71. **HIV/AIDS has already produced marked increases in mortality in Africa, the region most affected by the disease. While it is not yet certain that the spread in other regions will follow the pattern observed in Africa, rapid and effective responses may be required to avert the devastation that continent is already experiencing.**

72. **Involving hundreds of millions of people and affecting countries of origin, transit and destination, international migration is at the forefront of national and international agendas. The many questions arising from growing concerns about international migration have few clear answers and are posing unprecedented challenges.**

73. **Developed and developing countries differ significantly with regard to their degree of concern over most population issues. In the more developed regions, low fertility and population ageing are of major concern to the majority of Governments. In the less developed regions, high fertility, population growth and mortality, in particular infant and child mortality and maternal mortality, are the issues of most concern to the majority of Governments. However, in both the more developed and the less developed regions of the world, concern over HIV/AIDS is at the top of the population policy agenda.**

Notes

[1] United Nations publication, Sales Nos. E.01.XIII.8 and Corr.1, E.01.XIII.9 and E.01.XIII.20.

[2] To be issued in 2003 as a United Nations publication.

[3] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.XIII.12.

[4] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.75.XIII.3.